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Red Gate Bridge set to open in St. Charles

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By ASHLEY RHODEBECK - arhodebeck@shawmedia.com Created: Saturday, December 15, 2012 5:30 a.m. CST Updated: Saturday, December 15, 2012 2:03 p.m. CST

Comments (...)

Fox River crossing.

become a reality."

ST. CHARLES - More than 100 people are expected to gather this morning to celebrate the opening of Red Gate Bridge, a \$31 million, decadeslong undertaking that provides St. Charles with its northernmost

"In the spirit of Christmas, good things come to those who wait," Mayor Don DeWitte said. "Clearly, this is a project that our residents have been very patient in waiting for but very persistent

in their wishes that this project

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The Red Gate Bridge is expected to open to traffic today. (Sandy Bressner - sbressner@shawmedia.com)

The need for a bridge in northern St. Charles dates to at least 1928, when it was noted in the comprehensive plan, city staff have said. It also was mentioned in long-range documents such as the Kane County Department of Transportation 2030 Transportation Plan and the 2007-2012 Transportation Improvement Program prepared by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning.

Twelve years after land acquisition began, the St. Charles City Council unanimously voted in July 2011 to award a contract for the first phase of construction and, along with many others a month later, celebrated the project's official groundbreaking.

Today, Red Gate Bridge will open to vehicular traffic after an 11 a.m. ribbon-cutting ceremony.

"While somewhat anti-climatic, the realization that the project has finally finished ... [is] a tribute to the

staunch support shown by our residents over the years," DeWitte said.

Red Gate Bridge is the city's fourth Fox River crossing, joining regional Main Street Bridge and the Illinois Avenue and Prairie Street bridges, which primarily serve local traffic. The three older bridges are within one-third of a mile of each other in the downtown area.

It is intended to improve community connections between northeast and northwest St. Charles, reduce traffic on Main Street Bridge and improve access for emergency vehicles in northern St. Charles and surrounding communities.

St. Charles Township resident Dale Seidel questions how useful the bridge will be for city residents but said he is looking forward to using Red Gate Bridge to zip across town.

"I'm one of the 10 to 12 people this bridge is literally a godsend for," Seidel said. "I have a bridge sixtenths of a mile north of me - Stearns Road Bridge. Now I have one within a golf shot of me. I don't ever have to go through St. Charles."





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St. Charles School District 303 Superintendent Don Schlomann said the bridge will benefit students who have classes at each high school.

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"It's going to connect North High School to East High School much easier than what we've had in the past," Schlomann said.

A COMPLEX BRIDGE

Made with steel girders, the bridge extends Red Gate Road about 0.6 miles from Route 31 to Route 25, about a guarter-mile south of Army Trail Road.

"I think the residents are really going to enjoy the hard efforts of the city and the contractor," city engineer Jim Bernahl said.

A pedestrian and bicycle pathway beneath the roadway will connect existing trails on either side of the river is expected to open next spring. That, coupled with the bridge's curves, make Red Gate Bridge

James McHugh Construction Company served as contractor. Alfred Benesch & Company was the consulting engineer.

stand out, Bernahl said.

"This bridge was considered a complex design," he said.

and cast as small a shadow as possible. Pedestrians and bicyclists are prohibited from the vehicular roadway, which features low railings

intended to enhance the view of the Fox River, Bernahl said.

The surroundings, including nearby homes and the environment, also were taken into consideration when designing Red Gate Bridge, Bernahl said. For example, it was built to have a minimal footprint

"I think people will be struck by the design, how it fits in with the landscape and the wonderful views of the river that are created," DeWitte said.

45 PERCENT GRANT FUNDED

The entire project – including land acquisition, engineering and utility relocation – cost just more than \$31 million, city finance director Chris Minick said, noting construction cost about \$23 million.

From a financing standpoint, Minick said, the project was well planned. Grants will pay for about 45 percent - \$13.923 million - of the costs, and the city has saved about \$9 million in tax dollars for this project since the early 2000s, he said. He noted it is rare to see a government use such a long-term

and disciplined funding approach.

"That's a very substantial amount of money ... to have to pay in cash and not have to finance," Minick said.

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percent interest rate, Minick said. He said other funding included initial contributions of \$120,000 from the general fund, nearly \$1.5 million in escrow accounts for utility extensions and \$1.78 million for water and electric improvements.

The city will continue to set aside tax dollars to pay off the \$4.86 million in bonds, which have a 3.05

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